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ABSTRACT

Addressing the problem of the current and future shortage of teachers, this paper lists concrete suggestions on recruiting and retaining teachers. Fifteen suggestions are made which may serve as a foundation for a state-wide teacher recruitment plan. The recruitment plan at the state level should lead to plans at the university level to further refine these state level suggestions. Fourteen specific suggestions are made for recruiting and retaining teachers at the university level. In order to understand the basic issues relating to student recruitment into teaching, and to provide options to enhance recruitment efforts at the state and university level, 12 suggestions are made for recruitment plans that may be used nationally. (JD)

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Avoiding the Teacher Shortage: A Mission Possible

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Avoiding the Teacher Shortage:
A Mission Possible

INTRODUCTION

Todays educational reports emphasize the central role of teachers and indicate an impending nationwide shortage of teachers during the coming decade. In a major study of America's public schools sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation the foundation President and former U.S. Commissioner of Education, Earnest Boyer states that the climate they found among teachers was affected very severely by a feeling of powerlessness, growth of decision making beyond the school, and accountability beyond the classroom. To talk about recruiting better students into teaching without examining the circumstances that discourage teachers is simply a diversion... Teachers are troubled not only about salaries but about loss of status, bureaucratic pressure, a negative public image, and lack of recognition and rewards (Feistritzer, 1983).

Teacher moral and the attitudes toward teaching are alarming. Twenty years ago, about 60% of teachers said if they were just starting out, they would definitely go into teaching again. Today, only 21% of public school teachers definitely would enter the profession again. Ten years ago 75% of parents surveyed said they would be pleased to have a child become a public school teacher. Today the figure is under 50 percent. All the data about who currently is going into teaching are gloomy. Not only are fewer persons choosing teaching as a career, but the academic caliber of those who are is decreasing. The reasons are not hard to understand; low pay, poor working conditions, little opportunity for upward mobility within the profession, and lack of status in the society. Less than 5 % of full-time college freshmen chose elementary or secondary school teaching as a probable career in 1982, compared to 19% in 1970 (U.S. Department of Education, 1983).

Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics' National Longitudinal Study of 1972 and its High School and Beyond study in 1980 showed that 12% of the college bound seniors said they intended to major in education in college in 1972. In 1980 only 7 percent chose education as an intended major. Women comprised 75 percent of those intending to major in education in both years. However, the number of female seniors who were college bound and who declared education as an intended major dropped from 19% in 1972 to 10% in 1980 (U.S. Department of Education, 1983). These data are further substantiated by the fact that fewer than 5% of the high school seniors who took the SAT in 1982 said they intended to major in education at college. This percentage is down 50% since 1973 (College Entrance Examination Board, 1982).

Few educational issues have caused as much concern as those relating to teacher supply and demand. The shift is away from education and social sciences into more technical fields. Indications are that education loses out to other higher status, higher-paying career choices especially among brighter students who have the greatest career choices. Recent degree recipients certified to teach but not teaching are much greater than the number teaching with or without certification or the number of newly qualified to teach. This problem may be particularly acute in the south because 1/3 or more of veteran teachers have 25 or more years experience and are rapidly

approaching retirement.

RECRUITMENT PLANS

Nationally we must remain mindful that there is a diminishing presence of students in our institutions of higher education who are interested in teaching and we must insure that steps are taken immediately to reverse that trend. In Arkansas alone, in 1987-88 there were documented shortages that indicated that more than 80% of school districts in Arkansas have certification deficiencies. Particularly acute areas include physics, journalism, advanced math, and chemistry. Because of a declining enrollment of participants in teacher education programs and an aging teacher population throughout the nation, the teacher shortage is expected to continue.

States need to develop a variety of approaches that will begin to address this problem. One of the ways to reduce the shortage of teachers in critical areas is to offer alternative routes to certification. Arkansas, as well as many other states, has devised and implemented a plan for tapping a pool of people who hold Bachelor's degrees and who appear to have an interest in the teaching profession.

Another facet of the recruitment problem is the need to increase the number of minorities in the applicant pool. The following could serve as a foundation for a state-wide teacher recruitment plan:

1. Create a senior level position in the State Department of Education with the primary function of recruitment and retention of educators. Special emphasis will be placed on the recruitment of minorities into teaching.

2. Develop a program to make the public aware of the seriousness of the problem.

3. Districts would implement a home instruction program to increase home and family involvement. One part of this program could include information indicating that teaching is a desirable career choice.

4. Establish renewable grants for new students per year entering institutions of higher education and who plan to pursue teacher education programs. Eligibility- first time freshmen in teacher education, academic potential based on standardized tests and high school grades, and completion of selected courses in high school.

5. Establish renewable scholarships.

6. Fund summer enrichment programs at colleges and universities such as YOU and Upward Bound for intermediate and junior highs school students.

7. Gather data on success/failure of students currently in teacher preparation programs and report to governor and board of higher education. This data can be used to further refine recruiting plans for teacher education.

8. Provide funding for counseling of education students and development of a comprehensive support system for students while in college.

9. Provide financial assistance to enter and remain in teaching. Address salaries and current working conditions to retain the current teachers and perhaps entice some of those with current certification but who are not currently teaching to begin to do so. Hire para-professionals to relieve teachers of all non-professional duties.

10. Develop an incentive program in matching funds for salaries to public school and colleges and universities which increase the enrollment in their teacher education programs.

11. Create endowed chairs in Colleges of Education.

12. Sponsor summer teaching institutes. At these institutes provide junior high and high school teacher with positive role models of teaching and begin to infuse the idea that teaching is an excellent career choice.

13. Establish a professional practice commission for the teaching profession.

14. Provide low interest loans to teachers willing to teach in economically deprived areas.

15. Make use of churches and civic organizations to recruit.

RECRUITMENT PLAN FOR A STATE UNIVERSITY

The interest in a recruitment plan at the state level should then lead to plans at the university level to further refine these state level suggestions. Each university that educates teachers should develop a university plan to increase the number of students that elect teaching as a career choice. This plan might include the following:

1. Provide scholarships for incoming freshman who declare majors in education and who meet specified standards as well as offer scholarships to upper level majors.

2. Target specific schools and recruit actively in those schools.

3. Provide intensive on-campus visits with innovative experiences for prospective recruits. Provide opportunities for high school students to visit the campus for brief periods in order to learn about university life through first-hand experiences. During the visits, students might spend time in classes, talk to current students in the program, find out about financial aid and application procedures, and participate in campus social activities.

4. Identify key persons in communities to assist with recruiting. Make use of university graduates to assist in this effort.

5. Invite representatives of targeted groups on campus for special appreciation and orientation sessions.

6. Invite high school counselors to recommend students with potential for teaching. (Counselors often recommend other career choices for the brightest students and discourage them from teaching as a career choice).

7. Actively recruit students from community colleges. Increase cooperation between university and community college personnel.

8. Work to ensure that education students presently enrolled in teacher education programs are successful and satisfied. Additional activities in this area might include:
   a. provide for positive press releases in hometown newspapers.
   b. provide for regular articles to appear in campus newspapers about education majors.
   c. create a student advisory council.
   d. encourage a student "replacement" campaign. The purpose of this campaign is to encourage each education major to recruit another student to take his/her place in the program by the time the student graduates.

9. Provide opportunities for education faculty to become visible in meaningful university related endeavors in the communities in which the university serves. Visible and respected faculty members attract students.

10. Develop and implement pre-collegiate programs in the schools in our service area. Let academically talented youngsters register as guest students while in high school with the understanding that courses taken will count for degree credit upon their admission. Initiate informational programs about the teacher education program in communities, schools, etc.

11. Establish a toll free line to call about the school of education.

12. Develop a network with elementary and secondary teaching associations which includes direct contact with youngsters in middle school and is maintained as they progress through high school.

13. Host "College for Kids" programs during the summer or designated weekends.

14. Develop feeder schools in an effort to create a tradition of students from the feeder school attending the university and enrolling in teacher education program.

ELEMENTS OF RECRUITMENT PLANS IN USE NATIONALLY

In higher education we must understand and assist others in understanding the basic issues relating to student recruitment and provide options to enhance recruitment efforts by describing current successful programs. Some suggestions in use across the country for improved recruitment include:

1. Tap two year colleges.

2. Provide job and scholarship assurance programs for middle school students.

3. Bringing high school students into a tutorial situation.

4. Providing programs to welcome prospective members to the teaching fraternity at an earlier stage.

5. Encourage students to switch or complete enough hours for certification.

6. Run television spots featuring teaching as rewarding.

7. Remind students that teaching can lead to management.

8. Provide a state-wide support program.

9. Implement a teacher cadre at the middle school level.

10. Implement a high school teacher/mentor program.

11. Teach a college university freshman and sophomore career seminar program.

12. Provide forgivable loans.

Many students have certain aspirations when they come to college. They want to become business majors, doctors, lawyers, etc. As they start on their career choices they may find that it is not quite what they imagined. Students suddenly find that they need to change majors. Colleges or schools of education need to put forth a very positive image for their students. We could then attract many of these individuals who are looking to change or redirect their educational career choice. Another avenue is to encourage certification in their majors. Students can be encouraged to become certified as well as "majoring' in their academic areas. Students majoring in one teaching area can be encouraged to do dual certification, thus making them more employable. Having a variety of teaching competencies may also make their retention as a teacher longer (Bullock, 1985; Ferrara, 1983; and Bell and Steinmiller, 1986).

Keeping the students that are already in teacher education programs should be a matter of common sense, but it is an area that may often be overlooked. Teacher education should not be the major from which students go but rather the program should attract and retain good students. One of the ways that teacher education programs might keep their majors is through modeling of excellent teaching. If the courses in education are known as the best on campus thus refuting the old rinky-dink attitude of the past, this will encourage students to continue in education and for others to select it as a major.

The real solution may not be re-allocation of able students but redevelopment of strategies to increase the potential pool of students who complete high school and are eligible to attend college. Colleges, to be successful, must begin to seek students several years before they will be ready to consider teaching careers. The shortage of teachers is not the failure of higher education, but unfortunately may result from the twelve year

educational system which fails to instill in disadvantaged children the belief that they can succeed. Our shortage of teachers may begin in kindergarten when we fail to foster in disadvantaged children self-worth and a sense of whether they are going to make it or not. Dr. Hornbeck, Maryland State Superintendent of Schools, also sees 3 and 4 years olds from poor families as a key to the long-term expansion of the teacher pool.

We must begin to match our liberal arts and science programs with what students will be tested on and modifications of the curriculum such as five year programs must be studied carefully. These programs greatly increase the cost of entering education while most existing salary structures do not adequately compensate for the extra year of training. State competency tests of basic skills must be examined as they communicate to students that only prospective teachers, as opposed to those planning to enter other professions, require testing for mundane skills. State certification requirements that make no difference whatsoever in the quality of teaching while increasing bureaucratic costs of the educational enterprise must be removed.

The root of the problem is the public perception that teachers don't do anything very sophisticated. This is reinforced by the working conditions we impose on teachers. How many true professionals have hall duty or lunch room duty this week? The problems of attracting larger numbers of individuals into the teaching profession are part and parcel of the larger problems such as the reward structures and negative attitudes toward the profession. To adequately address the issues will require us to overcome our educational myopia and stop attempting to heal broken legs with band-aids.

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